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The leader of the team that wrote the secret study wonders if we have yet learned what not to do GUEST PRIVILEGE: LESLIE H. GELB

# Today's Lessons from the Pentagon Papers

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The scene is the same and the cameras begin to roll again. It is Take 26 in the Vietnam epic that began for us in 1945. The actors have changed, but the roles remain wholly recognizable. The present U.S. ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, stands accused in the Saigon press of seeking, but failing, to bribe Big Minh to run for the South Vietnamese presidency in order to make the elections "honest." President Thieu predictably has the field all to himself for reelection in what is now clearly seen as an electoral mockery. Saigon's armed forces are reported to be stepping up their already wide-ranging activities in dope-pushing and black marketeering. Though the number of American casualties is greatly reduced, the dying—civilian and military—still goes on in South Vietnam. Back in the U.S., speculation is on the rise that the 1972 elections and President Nixon's impending trip to Peking promise an early end to the war in Vietnam.

These stories are in today's news. As I read them, I cannot shake the feeling of their simply

adding another chapter in the Pentagon papers. These papers, which dazzled in the headlines for over a month and continue their life on the paperback newsstands, have lessons to teach us about Vietnam and, more importantly, about how foreign policy is made in our nation—lessons which, I believe, are still unlearned.

Before talking about these lessons, I should clear up some misunderstandings of what we on the Vietnam History Task Force that produced the Pentagon papers set out to do. Secretary McNamara instructed us "to let the chips fall where they may," and did not in any way seek to intervene in or pass judgment on our efforts.

We were not a flock of doves working our vengeance on the Vietnam war. We were a group roughly of 18 military officers, nine civilians from different parts of the government and nine professional scholars from think tanks and universities. I would say that about one-fourth were basically supporters of administration policy, a handful were highly critical of the U.S. commitment, and the bulk did not question the commitment so much as the means for meeting the commitment. No one was ever asked his views before being signed on.

Washington is a town which operates on the